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Iraqi Opposition: Status and Prospects

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An Intelligence Assessment

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December 1983

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Iraqi Opposition: Status and Prospects

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It
was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. [redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Persian Gulf Division, [redacted]
[redacted]

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**Iraqi Opposition:
Status and Prospects**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 23 December 1983
was used in this report.*

The leading Iraqi opposition groups have grown stronger within the past year, largely as a result of increased Iranian support. We believe, however, that the opposition groups will have to grow considerably stronger before they pose a major threat to the Iraqi regime. The main dissident groups are the Shia-based Dawa Party and the Kurdish nationalist parties. Both the Kurdish rebels and Shia dissidents operate from bases inside Iraq.

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The Kurds are the most immediate threat to the regime of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn. Iraqi Kurds have a long history of rebellion against the central government. Iran is now trying to seize bases along the border from which it can supply the Kurds with weapons. The Iranians are working primarily through the largest Iraqi Kurdish rebel group, the Kurdish Democratic Party, led by Idris and Masoud Barzani.

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We believe, however, that the Iraqi Kurdish dissidents, who are badly split along ideological and personal lines, cannot form an effective common front against the government. The second-largest Kurdish rebel group opposes the Barzanis. Kurdish tribes threatened by the Barzanis have rallied to Baghdad's side and are serving as scouts and auxiliaries for Iraqi forces.

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Iraqi Shias pose a longer term and potentially more serious threat. They constitute the majority of the population and are concentrated around Baghdad and vital oil facilities and transportation routes in southern Iraq. The main Iraqi Shia opposition group, the Dawa Party, has exploded several car bombs in Baghdad since late 1982 and assassinated several middle-level government and security officials.

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So far, however, Dawa has proved no more than an irritant to Iraqi security forces. Iraqi Shias have turned a deaf ear to Iran's persistent calls to revolt. The Shia community appears cowed by the security forces and unwilling to cooperate with Dawa. Moreover, the Iraqi regime has exploited linguistic and ethnic differences between Iraq's Arab Shias and their non-Semitic Iranian coreligionists to encourage loyalty to Baghdad.

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Iraqi opposition groups are hampered by the rivalries of their principal foreign patrons—Iran, Syria, and Libya. Each of these states tries to manipulate the opposition for its own ends. Iran wants to replace Saddam with a Shia theocracy; Syria and Libya want a secular-radical regime. The three states try to undercut each other's schemes. In the process, the opposition to the Iraqi regime is weakened.

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Moscow has few active links with the Iraqi opposition and, we believe, is pinning its hopes on the Iraqi military. The Islamic fundamentalist Dawa is virulently anti-Communist, and Kurdish contacts with the Soviets appear minimal. The Iraqi Communist Party is decimated. As a major supplier of arms to Baghdad, Moscow has numerous opportunities to establish ties within the Iraqi military. We estimate approximately 1,000 Soviet military advisers are serving in Iraq. [redacted]

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We believe the Iraqi opposition groups have no prospect of overthrowing Saddam by themselves. Their future depends on the outcome of the Iran-Iraq war. A long war of attrition, the most likely scenario, will primarily benefit the Kurds, who will gradually take over large areas of the north as Iraq draws down its troops there to fight Iran. [redacted]

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If Iran wins the war decisively—a less likely outcome—Tehran would impose a Shia fundamentalist government in Iraq based on the Iranian model. Immediately after Iran's victory the Iraqi Shias probably would rally to the victors, with leaders of the Dawa Party assuming provisional rule in Baghdad. Over time, however, we would expect racial animosity between Iraqi and Iranian Shias to reassert itself. [redacted]

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In the event the war ends in a truce, the Iraqi opposition probably would be decimated. Baghdad would transfer large numbers of troops into Iraqi Kurdistan, forcing the rebels back into Iran or Syria. Increased oil revenues would be used to raise the Iraqi Shias' standard of living, undercutting Dawa. [redacted]

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A total Iraqi defeat would be the outcome most damaging to US interests. Without Iraq to act as a brake on its activity, Tehran would export its revolution throughout the region. Iraq, under an Islamic regime, would work in tandem with Iran to subvert moderate Gulf states. Kuwait, in particular, might succumb quickly to combined Iraqi and Iranian pressure. [redacted]

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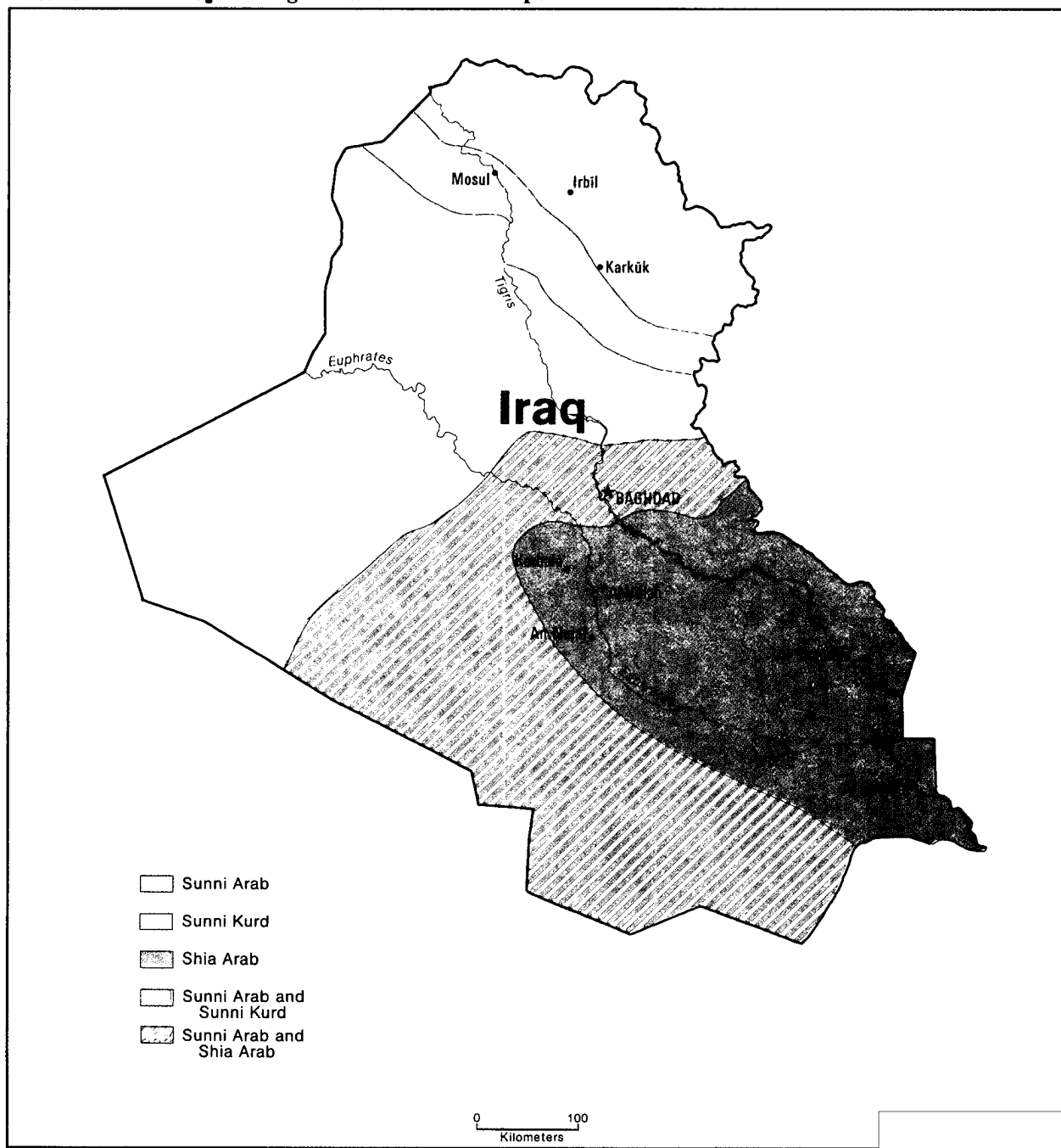
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Figure 1
Distribution of Major Religious and Ethnic Groups



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Iraqi Opposition: Status and Prospects

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Iraq is one of the most fragmented societies in the Middle East. Some 55 percent of the population is Arab Shia, geographically concentrated in the south. The country, however, is ruled by Sunni Arabs, narrowly based tribally and geographically in the Tikrit area north of Baghdad. The far north is populated by Kurdish tribesmen, a people distinct from both the Shias and the Sunni rulers of Iraq, with a long history of rebellion against governments in Baghdad.

Not surprisingly, the Iranians are exploiting Iraq's divisions to bring about the downfall of Iraqi President Saddam Husayn. Tehran aims at replacing the secular Ba'thist regime in Baghdad with an Islamic fundamentalist government based on the Iranian model. To achieve its goal, Iran is relying on a war of attrition combined with subversion and economic pressure.

The reappearance of active opposition inside Iraq represents a personal defeat for Saddam Husayn. Starting in the early 1970s the Iraqi President undertook to crush the opposition forces. By 1980, when the current war broke out, he had almost achieved his goal. Not since 1958 and the founding of the Iraqi Republic had all opposition groups in the country been silenced.

The Kurds first felt the weight of Saddam's repression. For almost two decades Kurdish guerrillas had fought for autonomy in three Iraqi northern provinces, the home of 2.5 million Iraqi Kurds (see map). Under their leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the Kurds repulsed seven Iraqi Army offensives between 1961 and the early 1970s. But in 1975 armed rebellion ended abruptly when Saddam made a deal with the Kurds' principal patron, the Shah of Iran. In return for border concessions from Baghdad, the Shah cut off aid to the Kurdish rebels, according to press accounts of the negotiations in Algiers.

Saddam next struck at Iraq's Communist Party.¹ In 1978 he began a crackdown on the Communists,

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This precipitated an exodus of over a thousand Communists, according to press reports.

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One major center of opposition remained—the Shias. Shia militants in Iraq, responding to appeals from Ayatollah Khomeini, mounted a violent campaign against the Iraqi Government in early 1980. Shia terrorists assassinated several minor Ba'thist officials and blew up a railway train in southern Iraq.

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Violence peaked in April 1980 with an unsuccessful assassination attempt by Shia dissidents on Iraq's present Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, according to press reports.

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Saddam responded with a ruthless campaign of repression. he executed approximately 900 Shias and jailed more than 2,000. Among those executed was a prominent Iraqi Shia ayatollah, Muhammad Baqr Sadr. in 1980 Saddam deported to Iran over 33,000 Iranian Shias living in Iraq.

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The war with Iran, however, has helped revive the opposition. Since the outbreak of the war in September 1980, Iraq has been steadily withdrawing troops from its northern provinces. We estimate Baghdad had approximately 100,000 troops in the Kurdish north before the war. By last summer the number was

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¹ In 1973 the ruling Ba'th Party, led by Saddam, publicly invited the Communists to join a coalition government. The move partly was to accommodate Moscow, then supporting the Ba'th, Saddam, however, ensured that the Communists did not enjoy real power.

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Shia demonstration in Karbala, Iraq

down to approximately 40,000.

The deteriorating security situation in the north was underscored in January by a bold guerrilla attack on a Turkish truck convoy carrying consumer goods.

The guerrillas, by striking at traffic on the Zakhu-Mosul highway, posed a serious threat to Iraq because the road is one of Baghdad's few remaining links to the outside world. The government increased road security, and the raids halted.

In July Iranian forces seized Haj Umran in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Meanwhile, the Shia opposition signaled its resurgence early this year with a series of car bombings in Baghdad. Shia terrorists struck a number of Iraqi public buildings using the suicide tactics employed by Shia zealots in Lebanon. In carrying out the attacks, the Shia terrorists claimed to have reestablished their underground network in Iraq, destroyed by Iraq's security forces in 1980.

Dissident Groups

We consider four Iraqi opposition groups to be significant: the main Iraqi Shia opposition group, the Dawa, with its action arm, the Mujahedin; the Kurdish Democratic Party; the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; and the Communists. All four have potentially large followings, all have one or more powerful states backing them, and all have shown the ability to survive over the long term.

Dawa/Mujahedin. Dawa is an Iraqi Shia opposition group, with headquarters in Tehran and London. The Tehran leadership works closely with the Islamic Republic of Iran, while the London group has ties to the radical Arab states of Syria and Libya. The Mujahedin is the action arm of Dawa.

It was the Mujahedin that carried out the car bombings in Baghdad early this year.

Dawa claims up to 40,000 members, but this almost certainly is an exaggeration.

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Dawa Party demonstration in Tehran

Dawa is led by three brothers, Mahdi, Muhammad Baqr, and Abdal Aziz al Hakim, members of one of the leading families of the Iraqi Shia community,

_____. Their father, Muhsin al Hakim, an ayatollah, founded the Fatima Society, the predecessor of Dawa. _____

_____ the Fatima Society was organized "to promote religious values and combat Communism." The Fatima Society appeared in the early 1960s when Iraq was tilting toward the Soviet Union, a move much feared by conservative Iraqi Shia clerics, _____

The oldest brother, Mahdi al Hakim, first came to the attention of Iraq's security services in 1970 during a Ba'th Party purge of alleged plotters against the

regime. _____ Mahdi, along with other prominent Iraqis, was accused of being an agent of the Shah. He fled to Abu Dhabi and later to Iran, _____

Mahdi publicly declared his support for Khomeini following the Islamic Revolution in Iran. He broke with the Ayatollah in 1980, however, and moved first to Damascus and then to London, where he now resides. Mahdi claims that Khomeini's plan to form a theocracy in Iraq is unrealistic. _____

_____ Mahdi believes materialist-minded Iraqis will not accept a government of religious scholars. Mahdi argues that only a pluralist government will succeed in Iraq. _____

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Instability Indicators

Iraq is a country where violence is endemic over wide areas. Violence by itself thus is not a certain indicator of instability. A more reliable indicator is any act that threatens the country's vital interests. For example, sabotage of Iraq's vital oil pipeline to Turkey is potentially destabilizing. A raid on an isolated police post in Kurdistan, on the other hand, probably is not. Such raids are routine occurrences and often do not incur a regime response. The following are signs of a dangerous rise in antiregime activity:

Among the Shias:

- *Shia-inspired wall posters appearing in any of the southern cities would indicate efforts by the Shia opposition to raise a general revolt.*
- *Violence during the Shia holy days, particularly during the pilgrimage to Karbala and An Najaf. The pilgrimage is a traditional Shia device for rousing antiregime sentiment.*
- *Assassination of Ba'thist officials in Baghdad or any of the southern cities.*
- *A prolonged Shia-directed campaign of urban terror probably would show community support for and protection of the terrorists.*
- *Rise of political activism among Iraqi Shia clergy.*

In Kurdistan:

- *Attacks by Kurdish rebels on trucks traveling the main highway south of the Iraqi-Turkish border because supplies vital to Iraq's war effort pass over this road, one of Iraq's major links to the outside world.*

- *Protests by students at the university in As Sulaymaniyah, a school with heavy Kurdish student enrollment.*

- *Guerrilla raids inside any of the major Kurdish cities—As Sulaymaniyah, Karkuk, Irbil, or Dahuk—during daylight hours. By night, guerrilla activity is routine. [redacted] The local garrisons retreat inside their barracks, and the guerrillas come and go at will.*

- *Draft riots in any of the major Kurdish cities. Such protests are rare because Kurds usually take to the hills to escape the draft or submit and then desert at the first opportunity.*

- *Assassination of local Ba'thist officials in Kurdistan.* [redacted]

Among the Communists:

- *The appearance of Communist cells operating inside Iraq's major cities. The party has practically no rural constituency; as long as it remains shut out of the cities, its effectiveness is negligible.* [redacted]

In the Military:

- *The appearance of dissident cells anywhere in the military would indicate a significant weakening of the regime's internal control.*
- *Significant terrorist activity directed at military targets, particularly ammunition dumps.*
- *A large rise in desertion rates.* [redacted]

The middle brother, Muhammad Baqr al Hakim, resides permanently in Tehran. Unlike his older brother, he endorses the Iranian mullahs' view of the religious state. [redacted]

The youngest brother, Abdal Aziz al Hakim, is the leader of the Mujahedin, an urban terrorist group, which, according to our estimates, numbers about 100 men. The Mujahedin's most spectacular accomplishment to date has been the bombing of two prominent Baghdad buildings—Iraqi Air Force intelligence headquarters and a television station—both on 21 April 1983. [redacted]

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Saddam has countered Dawa's appeal to Iraqi Shias by employing a carrot-and-stick policy. For example, Saddam undercut Dawa's claim that Shias were discriminated against in Iraq by appointing several Shias to top posts in his government. Among the more prominent Shia appointees are Hasan Ali, Minister of Trade; Sadun Hammadi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, recently replaced by Tariq Aziz; and Naim Haddad, speaker of the National Assembly. Within the military, [redacted] Shias include Lt. Gen. Abdal Jabbar Assadi and Lt. Gen. Ismail Tayih Nu'aymi, both special military advisers to Saddam. [redacted]

The Iraqi President also has contributed liberally to the upkeep of Shia mosques and co-opted Shia clergy with regular stipends, according to US diplomats in Baghdad. The diplomats report that Al Thawrah, Baghdad's largest Shia quarter and reputedly one of the worst slums in the Middle East, is being rehabilitated at Saddam's orders. Moreover, the expansion of Iraq's economy before the war helped the Shias, among the poorest of Iraq's citizens, [redacted]

The Iraqi President, however, does not hesitate to use ruthless repression against Shia militants. According to US diplomats in Baghdad, Saddam ordered the arrest in April of this year of 70 members of the al Hakim family living in Iraq after the bombing of the intelligence headquarters and television station. He subsequently executed six of his prisoners, according to press reports. Possibly as a result, Mujahedin attacks ceased this summer. [redacted]

Factors other than repression also influence the behavior of Iraq's Shias. [redacted] the community is not as responsive to guidance from its clergy as are Iranians. Tribal loyalties are the major influences on Iraqi Shias' lives, even when they move to the cities. Additionally, Iraqi Shias lack a charismatic leader similar to Khomeini who might inspire them to revolt. [redacted]

Saddam also has successfully exploited Arab nationalist sentiments among the Iraqi Shias. Iraq's Shia population is almost 100 percent Arab-speaking, whereas Iranians speak Farsi (Persian). Saddam has

played upon linguistic and cultural differences between the two peoples to encourage Shia loyalty to Baghdad. According to US diplomats in Baghdad, when Khomeini appealed for an Iraqi Shia revolt before the invasion east of Al Basrah in 1982, Iraqi Shias rallied to the government. [redacted]

Even attempts by Dawa to proselytize among the approximately 50,000 Iraqi prisoners of war in Iran have had only modest success. [redacted]

[redacted] Iraqi prisoners of war also have rioted against Iranian treatment and, according to press reports, have made several attempts to escape. [redacted]

Dawa leaders are aware of ethnic Iraqi antagonism toward the Iranians. [redacted]

We believe, however, that Iraq's Shias could become a threat to Saddam if Iraq's economy deteriorates much further. So far, Baghdad has been able to insulate Iraqis from economic hardship. But if Iraq cannot gain large deferrals of its European debts, the economic crisis will be felt at home. Shias benefited from Iraq's development boom. Many found employment as unskilled workers and, according to US diplomats in Baghdad, are now losing jobs as projects are suspended. [redacted]

The Kurdish Democratic Party. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), with a membership of about 10,000, is the largest and, [redacted]

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*Kurdish guerrilla on guard*

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[redacted] the most powerful Kurdish resistance organization. Its core is the Barzani tribe. Masoud and Idris Barzani, sons of the legendary Kurdish rebel chief Mulla Mustafa Barzani, are coleaders of the KDP. Smaller tribes also belong to the party. [redacted]

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The Barzanis lead the tribalist faction of the Kurdish resistance, backed by wealthy, landowning chiefs and sheikhs. This faction rejects practically all socialist measures imposed by Iraqi regimes since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, according to diplomatic sources. The tribalists particularly oppose land reform. [redacted]

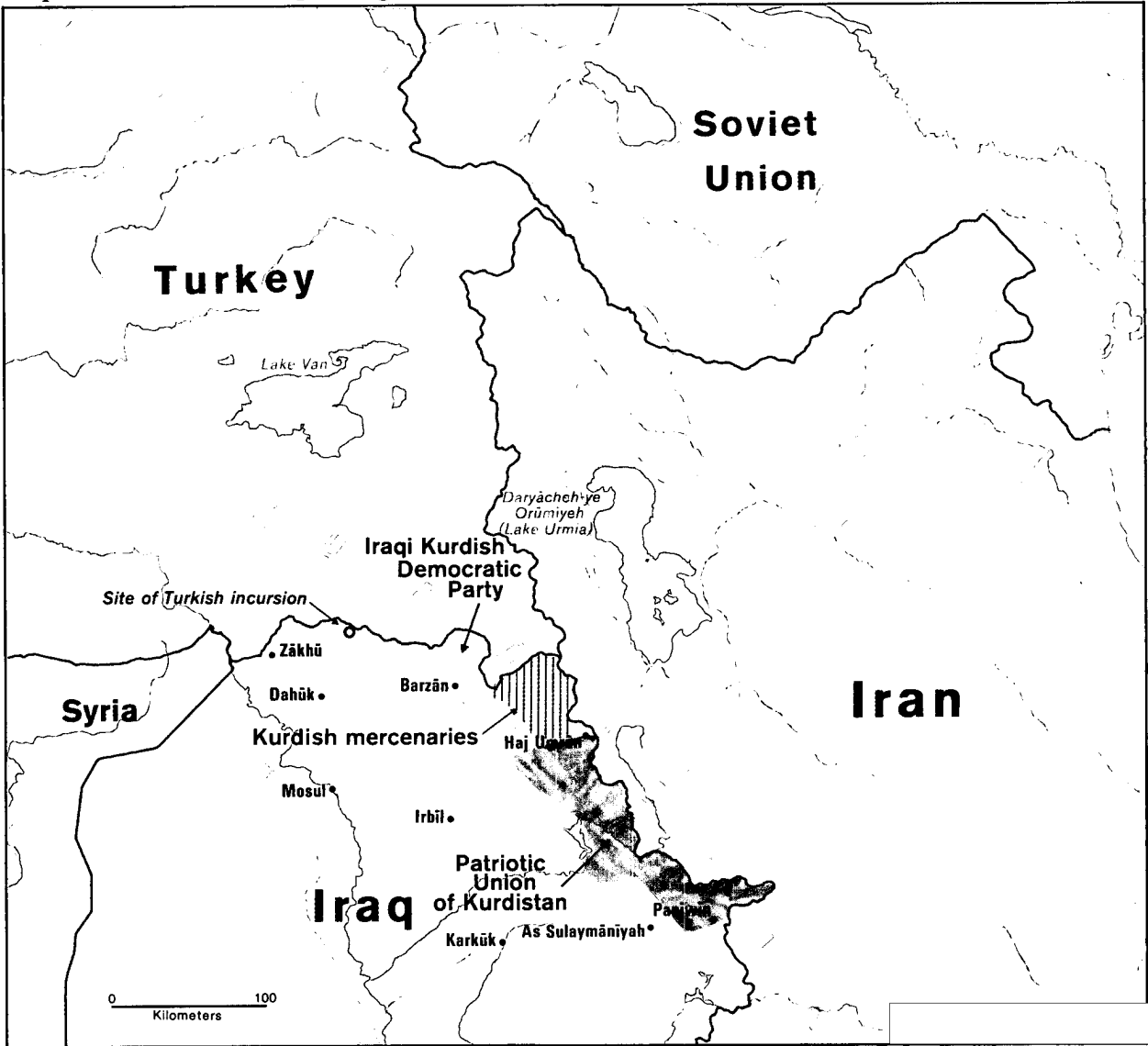
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Figure 2
Iraqi Kurdish Guerrilla Operating Areas



| Group | Leadership | Strength | Main Foreign Backer |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party | Masoud and Idris Barzani | Over 10,000 armed men | Iran, Syria, Libya |
| Patriotic Union of Kurdistan | Jalal Talabani | 2,500-3,000 armed men | Syria, Libya |
| Kurdish mercenaries | Chiefs of the Herki, Zibari, and Surchi tribes | ? | Iraq |

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The PUK and the KDP are bitter rivals. The leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani, is an avowed Marxist. According to US diplomats in Baghdad, Talabani draws recruits from among city Kurds, students, and professionals who have rejected tribalism and everything the KDP stands for. Kurdish leftists in particular resent Kurdish landowners, whom they regard as the betrayers of Kurdish nationalism, [REDACTED]

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The Barzanis and Talabani also personally dislike each other, [REDACTED] Talabani formerly was the chief lieutenant of Mulla Mustafa Barzani but broke with the guerrilla leader just before the collapse of the Kurdish revolt in 1975. Talabani later publicly blamed the Kurdish defeat on Barzani for placing too much trust in the Shah of Iran. [REDACTED]

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The KDP receives the bulk of its support from Iran with lesser subsidies from Syria and Libya. The Barzanis are outspokenly anti-Soviet, and this recommends them to the Islamic revolutionaries in Tehran. This anti-Soviet posture should not be overestimated, in our view. The Barzani brothers' father, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, accepted aid from Moscow in the 1960s, and we believe the KDP would reestablish its Moscow connection if that suited its interests. [REDACTED]

The PUK-KDP feud cannot easily be repaired. The Barzanis and Talabani both want leadership of the Iraqi Kurds, a position vacant since the death of Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Masoud and Idris Barzani are in line for the title, [REDACTED] neither brother has yet proved himself in battle, a serious defect with the Kurds. Talabani's claim to leadership is rejected by the tribal chiefs because of his support of land reform. [REDACTED]

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The KDP and Tehran are mutually mistrustful, according to Western diplomatic sources. [REDACTED]

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The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is the second-largest rebel group, with an estimated membership of 2,500 to 3,000. [REDACTED]

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Kurdish guerrillas outside As Sulaymaniyah

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Kurdish guerrillas near Panjwin, Iraq

Kurdistan. Curfews are observed in these cities between the hours of 1400 and 0600. During this time soldiers do not leave their barracks, and dissidents enter the towns and move freely, according to US diplomats in Baghdad.

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The government also controls the major highways, including the Irbil-As Sulaymaniyah and Irbil-Karkuk roads and portions of the Haj Umran road. According to US diplomats in Baghdad, the government has fortified the Irbil-Karkuk road with sand-bagged gun emplacements regularly spaced at 2-kilometer intervals. Trucks traveling the main roads do so in convoys of up to 15 accompanied by armed guards.

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The security situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is tenuous at present. Baghdad holds the cities of Karkuk, Irbil, and As Sulaymaniyah and the major towns in Iraqi

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Despite the insecurity in the north, US diplomats in Baghdad report that the Iraqi Government is willing to tolerate reduced control of the region as long as guerrilla activities remain confined to small units operating in the rural areas. Any attempt by the Kurds to harm Iraq's vital interests—such as sabotage of the Iraqi-Turkish oil pipeline—would, in our judgment, be dealt with harshly. [redacted]

The Communists. Once one of the most powerful Communist parties in the Middle East, the Iraqi Communist Party committed tactical political errors during the past decade from which it has never recovered. At Moscow's urging the party leadership agreed in 1973 to form a united political front with the Ba'thists. The decision eventually precipitated a split in the party cadres, [redacted]

[redacted] A minority fled to northern Iraq and joined the Kurds in guerrilla operations. The majority, after following Moscow's orders, were purged when Saddam turned on the party in 1978. [redacted]

Today the Communist Party is divided. Kurdish Communist guerrillas are still active, but they have never numbered more than 300. [redacted]

[redacted] The faction that remained faithful to Moscow is largely in exile in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. [redacted]

[redacted] Iraqi Communist leader Aziz Muhammad lives in Moscow and visits the Middle East periodically. [redacted]

Last year Moscow brought pressure on Saddam to repair relations with the exiled faction of the party, [redacted]

[redacted] The pressure followed Moscow's resumption of arms deliveries to Iraq. According to US diplomats in Baghdad, Saddam told Moscow he would not make concessions to the Communists unless they ceased all antiregime activities. [redacted]

Foreign Entanglements

Cooperation among Iraqi opposition groups is impeded by differences among their foreign patrons. Iran, Syria, and Libya have their own foreign policy goals in Iraq. These aims frequently conflict, and the dissidents are drawn into their patrons' squabbles.

The major division is between Iran on one side and Syria and Libya on the other. [redacted]

Iran. The Iranians do not want merely to topple the present Iraqi leadership; they aim at introducing a complete change of system, [redacted]

[redacted] Iran was opposed to the present Iraqi regime because it was based on Arab Ba'th principles that were directly opposed to Islam. A new, Islamic regime would be controlled by Shia religious leaders. [redacted]

In our judgment, Tehran has no serious interest in seeing non-Shia or non-Islamic opposition groups succeed in Iraq. The Iranian clerics have consistently favored Shia opposition groups, like the Dawa, over the radical/secular Communists and Talabani's PUK, [redacted]

[redacted] The Iranians, with their own sizable Kurdish community, are uncomfortable with the Barzanis' espousal of Kurdish nationalism. [redacted]

The Iranian clerics angered the Syrians and Libyans last December when they formed an exclusively religious Iraqi opposition front, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Syria and Libya responded by announcing the formation of a rival front, made up of both secular and religious opposition groups. [redacted]

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Syria. The Syrians have a long history of involvement in promoting Iraqi opposition groups. Since 1979 they have operated an Iraqi Affairs Bureau presided over by an official of the Syrian Ba'th Party National Command. [REDACTED]

Libya. Libya wants to see Saddam toppled in order to restore Iraq to the ranks of states actively opposing Israel. To this end, Qadhafi backs all dissident groups indiscriminately. [REDACTED]

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The Syrians have no interest in seeing Saddam replaced by a radical Islamic government, which then might undermine the secular Ba'th government in Damascus. [REDACTED] Damascus wants to replace Saddam with someone it can influence. [REDACTED]

Qadhafi has enthusiastically supported the formation of a united front of all opposition groups. [REDACTED]

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Qadhafi has tried to use his money to further his objective of a united front. He smooths over hostilities within the Iraqi opposition with bribes. [REDACTED]

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Syria's most dependable client among the Iraqi oppositionists is probably Talabani. The Syrians and Talabani have an association dating back at least a decade. Following the Kurdish defeat in 1975, Talabani kept up guerrilla raids on the Iraqis with Syrian support. Talabani's Marxism also recommends him to the leftist Syrian regime. So far it does not appear that Talabani's truce negotiations with Baghdad have impaired his Syrian connection. [REDACTED]

Syria provides the Iraqi oppositionists with light arms, including AK-47 assault rifles, mortars, mines, and grenades. [REDACTED]

Soviet Union. The USSR does not appear to be providing significant direct aid to the main opposition groups. Moscow has supported Kurdish nationalism at significant junctures in the past, particularly after World War II when it briefly sponsored a Kurdish breakaway republic in northwest Iran, but we have not detected major ties between the Kurdish dissidents and Moscow. Moscow has no influence with the Iraqi Dawa Party, which is virulently anti-Communist. All of the groups have weapons of Soviet manufacture, but they are supplied by Syria, Libya, or Iran or are purchased on the world arms market. [REDACTED]

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Figure 3
Infiltration Routes into Iraq



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Moscow's relations with Baghdad deteriorated sharply with the outbreak of the war with Iran but have gradually improved. In the summer of 1981 the Soviets relaxed their embargo on arms to Iraq, imposed at the start of the war. [REDACTED]

The Soviet Union would prefer an Iraqi leader more receptive to Moscow than Saddam. We believe, however, that Moscow will support the Iraqi President because the Soviets are afraid he will be replaced by an Islamic fundamentalist or someone openly sympathetic to the West. Moscow has urged Saddam to enter into discussions with the Iraqi Communists and probably views the return of the Communist Party to Iraq as a means of gaining influence over Saddam. A legalized party could organize and propagandize among the Iraqis. Such activity probably would attract many disaffected elements within Iraqi society. We do not believe Saddam will accede to Moscow's wishes. [REDACTED]

Whatever influence Moscow has with the Iraqi regime is through the military. As the major supplier of arms to Iraq, Moscow has had numerous opportunities to establish ties within the Iraqi military establishment. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We estimate that 3,800 Iraqi military officers have received training at military schools in the USSR since 1958. [REDACTED]

The Iraqi Army's role as a kingmaker has diminished since the outbreak of the war with Iran. The officers have been too occupied with the war to intrigue in the capital. The situation, however, may be changing. Saddam removed his half brother, Barzan Tikriti, as head of Iraq's intelligence services in October and replaced him with a military man, General Hisham Fakhri. The number of military men in high government positions in Iraq is increasing. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Saddam may be vulnerable to a military coup if this trend continues. [REDACTED]

Outlook

We believe the Iraqi opposition groups have no prospect of overthrowing Saddam by themselves. The groups are mutually mistrustful. Their patrons likewise are divided over their foreign policy goals for

Iraq. The Iraqi intelligence services and Army have remained loyal to Saddam, guaranteeing his control over the country. [REDACTED]

A War of Attrition. The future of the Iraqi opposition groups depends on the outcome of the Iran-Iraq war. A long war of attrition—the most likely scenario—primarily will benefit the Kurds. The Iranians are pouring weapons into Iraqi Kurdistan, and Saddam is arming Kurdish tribes friendly to him. The Kurds, once armed, will be difficult to control. As a result, we believe the outlook for Iraqi Kurdistan is increasing anarchy. [REDACTED]

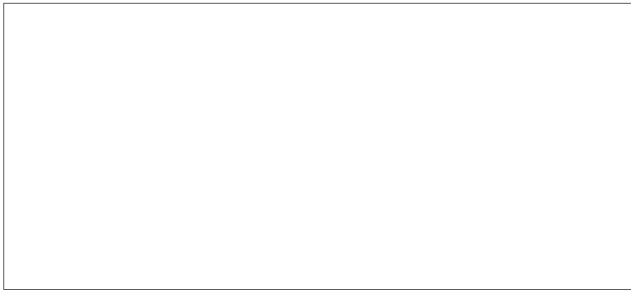
The Kurds will use a long war of attrition to consolidate their hold over the north. They have already taken over areas adjacent to the Iraqi-Turkish border vacated by Iraqi troops. By night they move freely inside the major cities of the region, according to US diplomats in Baghdad. The Kurds do not have to seize the major towns so long as they can intimidate the local garrisons. This frees them to carry on smuggling, to extort money from villagers, and to develop their paramilitary capabilities. [REDACTED]

A de facto Kurdish autonomous zone would become a magnet for rebel Kurds from Turkey and Iran and also Marxist elements. The Turks are sensitive to this danger because Turkey has perhaps 8 million Kurds living in southeastern Anatolia next to Iraqi Kurdistan. Ankara is trying to suppress an active Kurdish nationalist movement among its Kurdish population. According to diplomatic sources, the Turks have warned Tehran that by arming the Kurds at Haj Umran, they have undermined the stability of the entire region. [REDACTED]

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An Iranian Victory. A less likely scenario would be a sudden end to the war that produced a clear-cut Iranian victory. This outcome initially would enhance the status of the Dawa and the Mujahedin. Muhammed Baqr al Hakim probably would assume a caretaker presidency of Iraq. We would expect to see the Iraqi Shias initially collaborate with the Iranians. We do not believe an Iranian victory would solve the problems of the Iraqi oppositionists, and within a brief interval, most of the groups currently active would be once more in revolt. [redacted]

The impact of an Iranian victory also is likely to affect the Kurds adversely. Iran will not grant any significant autonomy to the Iraqi Kurds, fearing that this would provoke similar demands from its own sizable Kurdish community. The Iraqi Kurds almost certainly will reject any offer that is not substantial. Thus, we believe it would not be long before the Iraqi Kurds were in rebellion again, this time against the mullahs in Baghdad and Tehran. [redacted]

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The Iraqi Communists would have no hope under a fundamentalist Iranian-dominated regime. The Communists regard the Shias as Iraq's oppressed proletariat. [redacted] The Iraqi Communists historically have had frequent clashes with Dawa activists as the two movements battled for adherents among the Shia community. The Iranians would certainly not tolerate the Communists competing with them for the allegiance of the Iraqi Shia community. [redacted]

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We believe strains between Iranian and Iraqi Shias would most affect three elements of the Shia community—the clergy, the Shia merchants, and Shias living in urban slums. The Iranian mullahs almost certainly would take control of An Najaf and Karbala, the Shia holy cities in Iraq, after Tehran won the war. Iraq's Shia clergy would lose prestige and revenues if they no longer controlled these centers. [redacted]

A Negotiated Settlement. In the event the war ends in a truce, the Iraqi opposition probably would be decimated. Baghdad would transfer large numbers of troops into Iraqi Kurdistan, forcing the rebels back into Iran or Syria. Increased oil revenues would be used to raise the Shias' standard of living, undercutting Dawa. The Iraqi opposition groups would have little hope of being more than a minor irritant to the government in Baghdad. [redacted]

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We believe the wealthy Shia merchants of Iraq also would have cause to regret an Iranian victory. The merchants are extremely conservative and oppose radicalism in any form, whether of the Marxist or Khomeini variety. [redacted] The upper-class merchants would fear losing their possessions if Iran's revolution radicalized the Iraqi Shia masses. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

A complete Iranian victory over Iraq would be the worst outcome for US interests because this almost certainly would destabilize the Iraq-Iran-Turkey triangle and the Persian Gulf. Iran is too preoccupied with fighting the war to make a major effort to export its revolution. With Iraq defeated, however, no regional power could prevent the Iranian clerics from subverting their neighbors. [redacted]

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It is problematic how lower-class Iraqi Shias would respond to an Iranian victory. Until the war became seriously stalemated, commodities were abundant and standards of living on the rise in Iraq. Some lower-class Iraqis might welcome an Iranian victory because the Khomeini regime has consistently favored the lower classes. The transition from Saddam's policy of spend and consume to the austerity of Khomeini's Islamic Republic, however, would not be easy. [redacted]

The Persian Gulf almost certainly would become the Iranians' main target for subversion, with Kuwait possibly the first victim. Kuwait traditionally has maintained independence by playing Iraq and Iran off

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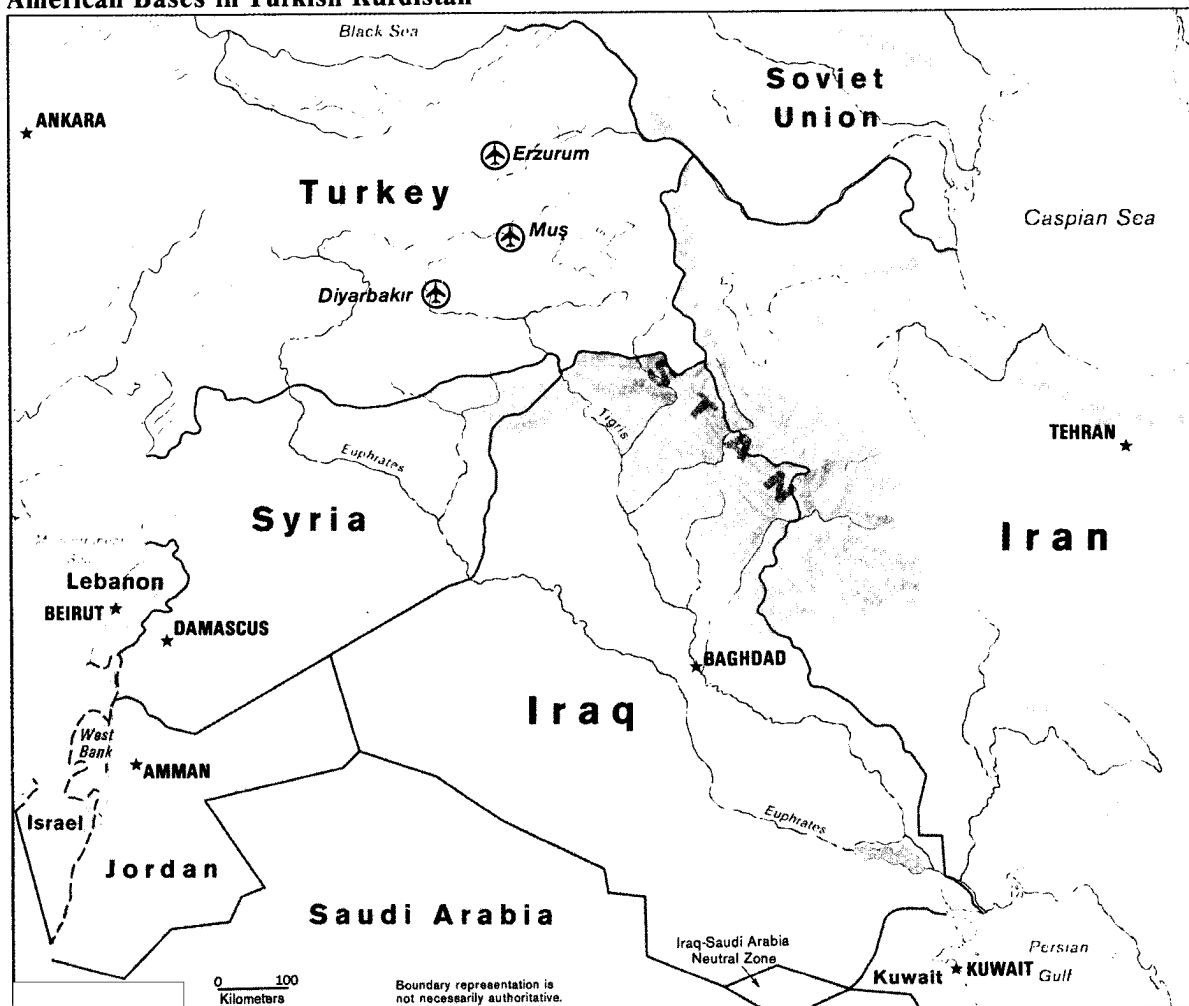
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Figure 4
American Bases in Turkish Kurdistan



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against each other. In the period immediately after the war, when Iraq and Iran are both ruled by Islamic governments cooperating in exporting the Islamic Revolution, Kuwait probably would be critically exposed. We estimate that 287,000 of Kuwait's 1.65 million population are Shia, and of these 65,000 are native Iranians.

Saudi Arabia has an extensive border with Iraq. With Baghdad's cooperation, Iran could easily move weapons and dissidents into the Arabian Peninsula. There is a small but significant Shia community in Saudi Arabia, the bulk of it in the oilfields of Eastern Province, where it comprises one-third of ARAMCO's work force.

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The defeat of Iraq also could have destabilizing effects on Syria. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

We believe it would not be long after Iraq was defeated before Tehran tried to overthrow Syrian President Hafiz Assad. [REDACTED]

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An Iranian victory also indirectly could destabilize northern Iraq. A defeated Iraqi state could fragment along ethnic lines and, in effect, disappear. In this case, Turkey almost certainly would seize Iraqi Kurdistan. [REDACTED]

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A war of attrition that strengthens the Kurds also could pose dangers for the United States. The United States is revamping three bases in Turkey's Kurdish areas for use by NATO forces. One of these bases is at Diarbakir, a southern Turkish city claimed by the Kurds as capital of a future Kurdish state. Kurdish nationalists so far have not attacked US personnel or installations, but the Kurds increasingly are allying themselves with Marxists. Their reluctance to challenge US interests in the area could change, particularly if they stepped up guerrilla operations in Turkey and the Turks reacted strongly. In such a situation, the Kurds might view US support for Turkey as directly thwarting their aspirations for a free Kurdistan. [REDACTED]

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Appendix A**Significant Dates in
the Shia Opposition
Movement**

| | |
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| 1964 | Khomeini exiled from Iran to An Najaf. |
| 1969-70 | Shia disturbances in Iraq. |
| 1970 | Dawa leader Mahdi al Hakim flees Iraq. |
| 1977 | Shias ignore government order to cancel pilgrimage to An Najaf and Karbala; rioting ensues. |
| 1978 | Khomeini expelled from Iraq to Paris. |
| April 1980 | Grenade attack on Ba'thist leader Tariq Aziz. Ba'th claims Dawa cell discovered in Army. Revolutionary tribunal passes death sentence on anyone associated with Dawa. Thirty-three thousand Iranian Shias expelled from Iraq; 900 Shias executed, and Iraqi Shia religious leader Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al Sadr dies in prison under mysterious circumstances. |
| August 1982 | Mujahedin bombs Iraqi Ministry of Planning. |
| November 1982 | Iran announces formation of Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq. |
| April 1983 | Mujahedin bombs Air Force intelligence headquarters and television station in Baghdad. |
| May 1983 | Baghdad executes six members of al Hakim family. |

**Significant Dates in
the Kurdish Resistance
Movement**

| | |
|------|--|
| 1961 | Beginning of Barzani revolt against regime of Abdal Karim Qassim; later develops into Kurdish civil war. |
| 1963 | First Ba'thist regime attacks Barzani after agreeing to a truce. |
| 1964 | Barzani expels to Iran the Kurdish Democratic Party's leftist faction under leadership of Talabani. |

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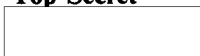
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| 1970 | Baghdad puts forth 15-point autonomy plan for three predominantly Kurdish northern provinces. |
| 1974 | After prolonged negotiation, Kurds reject plan and war resumes; Baghdad proclaims autonomy unilaterally. |
| 1975 | Iran and Iraq reach agreement on disputed border issues; Shah stops aiding Kurds—Kurdish rebellion collapses. |
| | Baghdad tries exchange of populations, moving Kurds to southern Iraq, peopling north with Arabs. |
| 1979 | Displaced Kurds allowed to return to north. |
| June 1980 | Elections for the Kurdish autonomous region held. |
| 1980 | Dissidence in Kurdish north intensifies after Saddam goes to war against Iran. |
| December 1982 | Baghdad releases Kurdish personnel from frontline service. |
| 1982 | Talabani negotiates with Saddam for a truce. |
| May 1983 | Turks raid Iraqi Kurdistan. |
| July 1983 | Iranians invade Iraqi Kurdistan. |
| Significant Dates in the Iraqi Communist Movement | |
| 1934 | Communist Party of Iraq founded. |
| 1959 | Communists massacre Arab nationalists—including Ba'thists—at Mosul and Karkuk, as Communists make bid for power in Iraq. |
| 1963 | First Ba'th Party crackdown on the Communists. |
| 1972 | Fifteen-year friendship treaty signed between Iraq and USSR. |
| 1973 | Communist Party declared a legal party in Iraq, joins a National Progressive and Popular Front, and accepts two cabinet seats. |
| 1975 | Baghdad and Tehran sign accord on border concessions; Ba'th increases harassment of Communists. |

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| 1977-79 | Ten Central Committee members of Communist Party fly to Moscow to argue for dropping out of Popular Front; Communist leaders flee Iraq; Ba'th executes 21 Communists. |
| 1981-82 | Recalcitrant Communist faction begins guerrilla operations against Ba'th in the north. |
| 1982 | Saddam releases 600 Communist prisoners and offers amnesty to Communist members in exile overseas. |

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